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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1)

The President: Members will recall that the Secretary-General presented his report to the General Assembly at the 4th plenary meeting, on 20 September 1999.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: When introducing his report to the General Assembly on 20 September, the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, asked Member States for their understanding of his decision to address the responsibilities of the United Nations in the next century in the light of the dramatic events of the past year. That is why on this occasion the delegation of Mexico would like to confine its comments to the Secretary-General's statement to the Assembly.

The report of the Secretary-General this year certainly covered many different themes relating to the life of our Organization, but the significance of his approach deserves particular attention. The delegation of Mexico will refer to the various issues covered in the report as they are taken up under the relevant agenda items during this session.

The Secretary-General affirmed that he was expressing his concerns in the context of his highest duty to restore the United Nations to its rightful role in the maintenance of international peace and security. He challenged Member States to make sense of the converging and contradictory elements of today's world and the requirements that they impose on our Organization. The central question seems to be this: What should be the parameters for the use of force in the twenty-first century?

Our Organization has certainly experienced good times and bad, some of them dramatic. The most recent of those dramatic events are at the root of the concerns and comments of the Secretary-General.

Mexico has always said — we said so again in the general debate this year — that it is proud of its multilateral outlook, the result of history, conviction and experience. We have always considered the United Nations to be the ideal forum to propose, agree on and implement solutions that will enable us to overcome collective challenges.

The spectre of war undoubtedly hovered over the authors of the San Francisco Charter, yet we must also pay tribute to the imagination, the lofty perspectives and the farsightedness of our founding fathers. Without the San Francisco Charter, would it be possible today to devise an institutional structure that — whatever its limitations and its shortcomings — could organize our activities and relationships in the spheres of health, children, education, the environment, finance, trade, telecommunications and many other human endeavours? Although it may not be as strong as many of us would

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wish, and although there may be storm clouds on the horizon, has the Organization not been a decisive factor for 54 years in preventing a nuclear holocaust?

Is not the fact that 188 Member States are represented in this Hall — 137 more than the founding membership — a reflection of one of the most noteworthy achievements of the United Nations: the decolonization process? Can anyone deny that this was made possible thanks to unequivocal recognition of the principle of the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples? Did not the United Nations regulate and moderate the complex transition in international relations at the end of the cold war? Has not the Organization provided a splendid forum in which to work together to conceive and work on the development of a new agenda containing both old and new political concerns, and in which to effect a qualitative and quantitative improvement in economic and social development?

Those are only some of the reasons for Mexico's steadfast support for the purposes, principles and provisions of the San Francisco Charter and for my country's unwavering commitment to the United Nations.

I have made these comments because Mexico is convinced that any analysis or consideration of the prospects for collective action by the Organization cannot and must not be carried out in a fragmented fashion. The use of force is in fact at the centre of the security system fashioned in 1945. But today, the United Nations, the institutional network we have built around it and the results we have managed to achieve — whatever the limitations and the failures — constitute a heritage that belongs to us all, that is useful to us all, and for which we are all responsible.

In our quest for responses to the challenges of the day, and in our delineation of the prospects for future action, we must bear in mind whence we have come and what we have achieved. We must also be fully aware of the consequences and implications of our decisions. The heritage to which I have just referred is also part of our common interest.

In her statement during the general debate, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Mrs. Rosario Green, said:

> "We note with growing concern that, far from disappearing, conflicts have multiplied and their nature has changed as a consequence of the reshuffling of forces in the international arena. Today, these ever-proliferating confrontations are to a great extent internal ones, presenting formidable challenges to an Organization conceived to resolve disputes between States. We still lack clear-cut mandates and a defined consensus on how to address this new state of affairs. This often divides us, not on the ultimate goal — peace — but on the means to achieve it. Given the absence of a new political contract that enjoys the support of all Members of the United Nations, Mexico will continue firmly to maintain that the search for solutions to conflicts, whether they be internal or international, must be in conformity with the letter and the spirit of the San Francisco Charter. Its principles cannot be subjected to interpretations varying with circumstances or to unilateral whims. We cannot allow the authority or the legitimacy of the Organization to be damaged. We cannot accept actions that openly contradict the intentions of the founders and that weaken the rights of the community of States.
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> "Mexico has always maintained that the use of force, even when motivated by the loftiest humanitarian impulses, is no solution; to the contrary, it generates further instability, uncertainty and violence. But my country has shown restraint when the Security Council has acted in strict compliance with Chapter VII of the Charter. Even so, the Mexican Government reiterates the value of the peaceful settlement of disputes and firmly rejects the existence of an alleged right to intervene, particularly when it is proclaimed outside the framework of international law.
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> "This is one of the most pressing challenges that we must face as we move towards the new millennium. Essentially, we are striving to give the United Nations the political underpinning that will enable it to face new threats to peace and security in line with the thinking that inspired the authors of the San Francisco Charter. If we fail, we run the risk of eroding international negotiating tools and of doing precisely what we want to avoid: weakening the Organization." *(see A/54/PV.11)*

The Secretary-General has reminded us that the Preamble of the Charter states "that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest". The challenge that the Secretary-General has placed before us seems to be rooted in what he calls the redefinition of sovereignty

and of the sovereign State as a consequence of the end of the cold war and the forces of globalization and international cooperation, and thus a redefinition of the relationship between the State and the individual.

An in-depth discussion of these topics, which are undoubtedly part of contemporary concerns and thinking, would take far more time than has been allocated to the entire General Assembly session. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore has said, reconceptualization of the very idea of government and statehood requires a complete change of mindset by the powerful as well as by the weak. And he added that this will be difficult and painful to achieve. I would venture to add that here in this room we find the representatives of at least 188 different perceptions of this crucial issue.

The delegation of Mexico appreciates the intellectual honesty and the courage the Secretary-General displayed in his statement of 20 September (A/54/PV.4) and we fully support the manifest objective of his presentation: to reinstate the Organization in its proper place in international relations.

In his statement, the Secretary-General asked us five questions: What is the common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it? Under whose authority? With what means?

These questions are, indeed, "monumental questions", as the Secretary-General himself says. As such, they merit close attention and consideration. Even though throughout my statement here today, I have referred specifically to these questions, we feel that their importance counsels careful, objective and responsible reflection. It is in this spirit that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico called upon all the Member States to embark upon a process of collective thinking, to enable us to correct the mismatch between the humanitarian crises caused by conflicts and our Organization's capacity to respond *(A/54/PV.11)*.

From this it should be clear that in the opinion of the Government of Mexico, answering the Secretary-General's questions is an imperative of the common interest: it is not the responsibility of a single individual, nor of a single nation, nor of 5 nor 15 to respond to the challenge set by the Secretary-General; it is the responsibility of all Member States. For Mexico, this is an absolute requirement, a duty that falls solely and exclusively to the General Assembly.

On the threshold of a new millennium, the credibility, legitimacy, the ethical and moral authority of the United Nations must be founded on the principles of equality, justice and democracy, which will continue to be the mainstay of contemporary civilization. Legal equality between States implies the elimination or at least, limitation of obsolete privileges. It also clearly implies a genuine recognition that interests — or temptations to dominate or subordinate by the use or threat of use of force — must give way to international relations based on reason and pluralism within a framework of universally accepted rules, which is to say, full observance, without selectivity, of the rights granted, and the obligations imposed by international law.

Justice demands a grand commitment to international cooperation. Human society today has at its disposal the resources to meet the most pressing needs of our planet's population and that is what it should use them for.

History shows that the most crushing want and need are the most fertile soil for conflicts. The Secretary-General says - and here we agree with him completely - that it always costs more to repair than to prevent. International cooperation for development is in the interests of all. "Fatigue" sees only the short term. In his message on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, President Zedillo said:

> "Peace is inseparable from development, and security is inseparable from prosperity. By sowing the seeds of development, we shall reap peace." *(A/50/PV.36, p. 17)*.

Democracy must be pursued as an ideal for life in our countries. At the same time, as the world becomes more interdependent and globalized, the moral and ethical imperative of democracy must prevail in relations within an international society that considers itself civilized, and therefore does not try to impose uniform models or one prescription for all.

We are at a crossroads where we must define whether our Organization will move forward on force of reason or by reason of force. In any case, let me again quote our Foreign Minister:

> "If we are really being overtaken by events in the global arena, we must strengthen our frame of action. If it is necessary to reform our Organization to guarantee its effective performance, let us do so. But let us do so collectively, with respect for the juridical principle of the equality of States. Let us not allow this forum to lose its prestige or its

influence. Mexico will not retreat from its commitment to the letter and the spirit of the San Francisco Charter. To the contrary, it will participate actively in the effort to guarantee the vitality of the United Nations in order to build a better world, both for ourselves and for future generations." *(A/54/PV.11)*

Mexico is a country convinced that dialogue is the best instrument in international relations. Where the dialogue is one that touches on the future of our Organization, we are convinced that it must include everyone. My delegation therefore respectfully invites you, Sir, as President of the Assembly, to begin consultations with the Member States as to the best possible mechanism for collective thinking about how the Assembly could organize itself to respond to the challenges and questions set by the Secretary-General.

The importance, implications and consequences of the questions put by the Secretary-General, warrant an initial exchange of views about how to tackle these challenges. We trust fully in your wisdom and leadership, Sir, to conduct this crucial process.

Mr. Schumacher (Germany): Let me first thank the Secretary-General and his collaborators for a comprehensive report. The United Nations has made tremendous efforts to meet last year's various challenges. The problems have indeed been unusually numerous and serious. The last 12 months, which the Secretary-General himself calls "tumultuous" in his study, have been anything but an easy period. On behalf of my Government, I would like to express my appreciation and respect to the Organization for the work done during this time. The report provides hard evidence that we need to change our response to some of the complex and manifold problems we have to cope with.

The Secretary-General entitled the introduction to his report "Facing the humanitarian challenge". It is very true that in the last year we have had to witness an unusual amount of natural disasters and wars. I should mention, amongst others, the disastrous earthquakes in Turkey, Greece and Taiwan, with their thousands of victims, and the enormous damage caused by hurricane Mitch in Central America. My fellow citizens are highly sensitive and responsive to these catastrophes. However, humanitarian aid provided by Germany and many other countries cannot be the sole answer. We therefore welcome the fact that the report emphasizes the need for a transition from "a culture of reaction" to "a culture of prevention", and we fully support the Secretary-General's appeal to create this "culture of prevention", with the aim of not only preventing conflicts and man-made disasters, but also preventing and mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other disasters with an adverse impact on the environment.

My Government is fully prepared to make its contribution within the framework of the United Nations in order to achieve the Secretary-General's aim of developing this culture of prevention. It has, in fact, already contributed to the adoption of two resolutions on early warning which were implemented within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. I also want to highlight the process that led to the holding of an International Decade conference on early warning systems held, in Potsdam, Germany, in September 1998. Germany is considering further steps in order to proceed on this path.

As to man-made disasters, I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's idea that the best long-term prevention strategy seems to be broad participation by the population in politics. Good governance and democracy are — to quote the Secretary-General — "a non-violent form of internal conflict management".

The United Nations task of peacekeeping has quadrupled in the last 12 months. Moreover, and much more important, traditional peacekeeping is increasingly developing into complex peace-building. The crises in the southern Balkans and now in East Timor have presented the United Nations with a peacekeeping challenge of a totally new dimension. The magnitude and complexity of the international operation in Kosovo — essentially governing an entire province devastated and depopulated by war — cannot be overestimated. In the months since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the United Nations has begun to prove its ability to fulfil the tasks bestowed on it — provided it is given the necessary funds, personnel and authority by the Member States.

Germany has tried to respond to this development from simple peacekeeping to multifunctional peace-building by sending, *inter alia*, lawyers, policemen and policewomen and teachers to Bosnia and Kosovo. It intends to contribute in a comparable way — for example, by assisting in the establishment of a judicial system — to the difficult United Nations Mission in East Timor. In two days the German General, Klaus Reinhardt, is to take over command of KFOR in Kosovo.

This symbolizes, more than anything else, that Germany remains committed to accepting its share of the responsibilities in international peace efforts.

Kosovo has undoubtedly challenged the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has underlined the truism that the United Nations can only be as strong and committed as its Member States are, or as its Member States allow the Organization to be. In this context, I would like to call upon Member States not only to unconditionally pay their contributions in full, but also to make these payments on time.

The Secretary-General mentions, not without criticism, the Security Council's general approach to crisis prevention. He thinks the Council is too hesitant concerning preventive diplomacy. We are constantly confronted with situations in which firmer and more far-sighted action by the Security Council could lead to conflict prevention.

Allow me to mention at this point another important issue. The Secretary-General refers in his report to "brutal disregard for humanitarian norms". He has elaborated on the relationship of the tension between sovereignty and non-interference on the one hand and the universality of human rights on the other hand. Yes, State sovereignty will and shall remain the guiding principle in international relations. But the concept of non-interference in internal affairs cannot be interpreted as giving the green light to blatantly violate of international commitments to the detriment of one's own people. The reputation of the United Nations as well as acceptance of it, would be at stake if the Organization were no longer seen as the advocate and protector of the human rights charter. We encourage and support any discussion on how humanitarian intervention can be brought into line with the United Nations task to maintain peace and security in the world.

The Secretary-General mentions a series of reform projects within the United Nations. Germany strongly supports his efforts. No State, no society, no organization can live without constant reform. If the United Nations wants to continue to be relevant and effective, it has to face this need for constant reform. We therefore appreciate the fact that the Secretary-General has, from the very start of his mandate, put reform and efficiency at the top of his agenda.

In this context, I would like to reiterate my country's conviction that reform of the Security Council is crucial. We must be able to rely on an efficient executive body of the United Nations which can act with authority and on behalf of the whole international community.

Reform of the Security Council, however, will not just happen. Discussions have been going on for several years now, without any noticeable progress. Success will depend on political will and pragmatism, and the conviction of Member States that reforming the Security Council is in the interest not only of the United Nations, but also of its Member States. Foreign Minister Fischer and many other speakers in this year's general debate have put forward reasonable ideas in this context, which should be discussed in the responsible forums.

In his report the Secretary-General outlines the different aspects of globalization. Hardly any of us can avoid being exposed to this phenomenon. We all profit from its advantages, but we also have to cope with its many disadvantages. Earlier this year the G-8 summit in Cologne dealt with questions of globalization. As a result, agreement about a debt relief programme for the heavily indebted poor countries was achieved.

Germany shares the Secretary-General's concern about the increase of cross-border illegal activities. On the EU level, a lot has been done to fight against supranational crimes. The agreements between the member States of the European Union could serve as an example — as a model — of successful efforts to fight international criminal activities.

In this context, I would like to express my hope that the work on two legal instruments on international terrorism will be finalized during the current session of the General Assembly. Germany has always supported the conclusion of an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism as well as an international convention for the suppression of the financing of terrorism. In our view, these two conventions are appropriate means to combat problems linked to terrorism.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the world community to globalize justice in the age of globalization. The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

is - and here I quote my Minister's speech before this Assembly -

> "a quantum leap in the development of international law. I call upon States to respect the integrity of the Statute, to sign it and to swiftly ratify it". (*A/54/PV.8*)

We are all aware that the period the Secretary-General reported on was a particularly difficult one. However, I doubt that the international community will face fewer problems during the coming 12 months. The new millennium could, on the contrary, bring forth even more challenges and the United Nations will be even more indispensable to cope with this development. Germany therefore wholeheartedly supports the Secretary-General's call to strengthen the Organization and to develop new tools to prevent crises. Let us try together as Member States to help the United Nations to better focus on the fulfilment of the tasks ahead.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for the preparation and presentation of the report contained in document A/54/1. During the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, my delegation conveyed its positions and participated in the discussion and development of the issues addressed in this document. We will again continue to present the positions and concerns of our Government throughout the year.

We cannot, however, avoid responding to the ideas presented by the Secretary-General during his participation in the general debate on 20 September, which also appear in the introduction of the report before us.

The humanitarian challenges to which he referred are among the central concerns of the Colombian State. These have been a consequence of natural disasters - the most recent being the earthquake earlier this year in the coffee-producing area of Colombia, which killed over 2,000 people and injured more than 100,000 - and of an armed conflict that the Government of Colombia is intensely attempting to resolve through a peaceful settlement.

This has been a year of great challenges for the United Nations system in all areas touching on the daily life of any nation. Of all these, however, it is the humanitarian challenge that has grown most alarmingly. The Organization has had to respond in a manner unprecedented in the history of the international community, unfortunately diverting to humanitarian operations resources that under normal conditions would have been earmarked for development.

The task of addressing humanitarian challenges in an integrated way is far beyond the United Nations system's capacity to respond. It is paradoxical and frustrating that greater engagement by the Organization will not necessary entail an improvement in the global humanitarian conditions caused by national disasters or wars and armed conflicts. The Organization has structural limitations that must be overcome by every means necessary whenever there are demanding humanitarian situations.

Colombia considers that one way to achieve a fair balance between the limitations of the United Nations and the many requirements of humanitarian crises is through the consolidation of positive, ongoing and committed systems of cooperation with legitimate national Governments, aimed at finding solutions. Unlike humanitarian interventions, in which United Nations limitations are compensated for by the direct assistance of great Powers, the system of cooperation to which I have referred would require national Governments to be interested and willing to participate in the prevention and solution of humanitarian crises. This hypothesis is based on the premise that any United Nations humanitarian action must, as a general rule, be acceptable to the State concerned.

The interaction between the United Nations system and national Governments must be ongoing, stable and persistent and must not be restricted to critical situations. The United Nations should not carry out duties that could have a negative impact on internal processes whenever important activities essential to the system are not taking place. The idea is to create systems of cooperation and to construct joint mechanisms for action that are adjustable to national, regional and local conditions. If we construct such a partnership between the United Nations and Governments, we can contribute to creating an effective mechanism to foster international coherence with respect to humanitarian emergencies and to guarantee the success of our short- and long-term strategies for preventing disasters and conflicts.

One of the difficulties of evaluating the work of the Organization in the prevention and solution of humanitarian crises arises when this is carried out on the basis of political or geographical considerations. We fully agree with the Secretary-General when he states that human need must be the sole valid criterion in

humanitarian crises. The offices, personnel, equipment and budget of the Organization must be geared towards that mission, giving due consideration to the fact that there are Governments that are willing and committed to being part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

We understand that the actions of some States to resolve and prevent humanitarian crises are sometimes conditioned by a number of political motivations. This is, however, a risk that must taken because it would be unacceptable to restrict the United Nations to playing a technical role that would frequently be very limited in relation to the dimensions of some crises. We favour more open and participatory mechanisms for the decision-making process in humanitarian operations.

With respect to humanitarian issues, the United Nations must be a source of leadership for the development of specific objectives. Let us choose the option of leadership through correct, precise, strict and, above all, timely approximations. Let us make the humanitarian work of the Organization the most efficient of all. Let us avoid the bureaucratization of this issue and, most especially, let us ensure that the United Nations system's response is determined by the reality and genuine magnitude of humanitarian crises and not by cut-throat competition between its agencies and institutions.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I wish to begin by congratulating the Secretary-General for presenting us once again with a stimulating and comprehensive report on the work of the Organization. It offers a broad survey of the main achievements of the United Nations, but more importantly, as the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs said in his statement in the general debate, the Secretary-General has given us an accurate diagnosis of the challenges that exist for the Organization and pointers to what needs to be done.

This important report gives a useful stimulus to what was a particularly focused general debate this year, in which many speakers addressed in clear and often thought-provoking terms what, I believe, remains the principal challenge facing the United Nations and its Member States: how best to respond to the political, human rights and humanitarian crises affecting so much of the world today. The report also reflects on how best to devise strategies aimed at anticipating and preventing such crises.

The Secretary-General rightly notes that bureaucracies, whether they are national or international, have yet to remove barriers to building the necessary cross-sectoral cooperation so essential for successful prevention. We must, however, applaud the Secretary-General for the reforms which he has undertaken, many of which have been successful in cross-sectoral cooperation within the United Nations.

If we consider the conflicts with which the United Nations is directly involved, we must ask ourselves: had all the instruments at our disposal been fully utilized, might it have been possible to limit the scale of the conflicts and reduce the humanitarian tragedies which ensued? These instruments are not new and the Secretary-General highlights them in his report. Regrettably, they are all too often ignored, or under-utilized, with the consequences which we now know too well.

Perhaps the first and most important instrument is that of early warning, which, as the Secretary-General rightly says, is now universally agreed to be a necessary condition for effective diplomacy. Perhaps there is a need for further work to help allay concerns that early-warning initiatives constitute an intrusion into the internal affairs of States or are perceived as an encroachment on national sovereignty.

In this regard, we have taken careful note of the Secretary-General's observation in his statement, at the beginning of the general debate, that we have difficulties in applying the principles of the Charter to a new era, an era when strictly traditional concepts of sovereignty can no longer do justice to the legitimate aspirations of peoples everywhere to attain their fundamental freedoms.

Perhaps we need to develop our thinking on how best to strengthen early-warning mechanisms. The humanitarian crises of the past few years have shown that this is an area where differences remain. Is it not time to consider what could be agreed and accepted as components of an effective early-warning strategy, and at what stage can or should they be activated?

The delegation of Ireland believes that essential ingredients for an effective early-warning strategy should include the following: first, information gathered by the Secretary-General from his contacts in the region where events could lead to conflict; secondly, information and analysis made available to the Secretary-General and Members of the United Nations by international and regional organizations; and thirdly, information from relevant non-governmental organizations.

If, as a result of this information, it becomes clear that unless urgent action is taken conflict will ensue, the

Security Council might consider, in consultation with the Secretary-General, the dispatch of an urgent mission of Council members to the area of conflict for the purpose of reporting on immediate steps that might be taken to prevent the crisis from escalating. Reports from such missions would, in our view, serve to reinforce the credibility and the authority of the Council's deliberations and eventual action.

Earlier this year, Ireland had the honour of chairing a working group of the Disarmament Commission, which, after three years of negotiations, adopted by consensus a set of practical disarmament measures. These measures covered issues such as the collection, control, disposal and destruction of small arms and light weapons. While they are of particular relevance in post-conflict situations, the measures also have a special relevance to a conflict which is approaching a solution, to a recently ended conflict, and, consequently, to preventing a conflict from re-emerging.

The work of the Disarmament Commission is a modest example of how the machinery of the United Nations has successfully made a substantial conceptual contribution in an important area. If properly applied, these measures can, as the Secretary-General states in his report, reduce the potential for violence and enhance stability, thus facilitating the development process. In this context, Ireland welcomes the re-establishment of the Steering Group on Disarmament and Development.

Many speakers in the general debate stressed the importance of tackling the root causes of conflict. Ireland fully agrees that this is a fundamental necessity in devising the necessary strategies to end a conflict and begin the process of post- conflict peace-building. There can be little doubt that one of the causes of conflict is often chronic underdevelopment which leads to economic marginalization and poverty.

In this context, the extent of the debt burden on developing countries, many of which are emerging from recent conflict, must be considered and confronted. My delegation welcomes the increased profile that this important question is receiving from the donor community and the international financial institutions. We attach priority to tackling the debt issue, which is now widely recognized as a major contributing factor to the economic stagnation and underdevelopment of many of the world's poorest countries.

The Secretary-General has correctly stressed that poverty alone does not appear to be a decisive factor in determining whether a country becomes embroiled in armed conflict. However, there is evidence to suggest that where a country has emerged from conflict and has embarked upon a process of post-conflict peace-building, timely international support is vital in helping to bolster that process and to prevent conflict from re-emerging. A key objective in the consolidation of peace must be to allow the administrative capacity and infrastructure that were damaged during the conflict to be rebuilt in a process of conversion from war to peace.

The complex nature of peacekeeping now involves a range of additional tasks which have made it truly multidimensional. Ireland, through its participation in the multinational forces operating under United Nations authorization in Kosovo and now in East Timor, is already playing its part in these new arrangements. We welcome the Secretary-General's assurance in his report that methods to coordinate these diverse activities more effectively are being pursued.

We commend the Secretary-General for the exceptional quality of his report and for outlining the reasons why the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention is not easy. The United Nations can be a powerful force for change. It can, through the instruments which it possesses, provide invaluable support to countries emerging from conflict. Above all it can help sustain human life through timely humanitarian assistance, whether in the aftermath of natural disaster or where conflict has forced people from their homes.

In the end, however, conflict can best be avoided, indeed, can probably only be avoided, when all members of society feel included. It is that sense of inclusiveness and participation which offers a means whereby profound differences can be accommodated. As the Secretary-General has emphasized in his report, peace, development and human rights are all interrelated. The right balance between them all is an objective which every nation, developed and developing, must strive to attain.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At this fifty-fourth session, and on behalf of my Government, I would like to express our deep gratitude for the efforts undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in administering the work of this Organization and bringing it to successful results at the end of this century. Our admiration for the report under consideration is immense. Its practical aspects clearly reflect the extensive

experience of the Secretary-General in his leadership of the Organization.

The report clearly shows the importance of the United Nations and the need to respect its noble objectives, and my delegation fully endorses the ideas put forward by the Secretary-General in it. He affirms the close link between peace and stability and between economic development, democracy, and respect for human rights. He has highlighted the sources of conflict with full honesty and clarity: some international conflicts are due to natural factors over which man has no control, while others stem from man-made socio-economic problems.

In this context, my delegation endorses the prevention strategies put forward in the Secretary-General's report, which he terms the culture of prevention. Those strategies should be the basis of the work of the Organization at all levels. Among the most important - strategies and measures that would hopefully be effective in preventing the disaster of war — we should mention the early-warning system and strong measures to deal with any international problem.

However, we call for great circumspection in studying this idea in order to ensure that it does not contradict the principle of State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

I wish now to take up a matter which is close to our hearts in Kuwait, because it affects the daily suffering of a whole people. It is the question of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and detainees as well as those of third countries. In this respect, we salute the Secretary-General for his sensibility and interest in this humanitarian issue, which proceeds from his responsibilities regarding the implementation of Security Council resolutions.

In the report before us today, the Secretary-General reaffirms that Iraq must implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in full, most notably those that relate to the questions of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and stolen property:

> "Our principal demands remain unchanged, however: Iraq must fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions; the international community must be assured that Iraq no longer has the capacity to develop or use weapons of mass destruction; missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals must be accounted for; and Kuwait's irreplaceable archives must be returned." (*A/54/1, para. 81*).

The contents of the Secretary-General's report is based on facts. For nine years, Iraq has not respected the demands to settle this humanitarian issue. This has been affirmed by the results of the third special team that was established by the Security Council to assess Iraq's compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions and by paragraph 48 of its report, which states that Iraq's cooperation was incomplete, in particular during the meetings of the Tripartite Commission, established under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Technical Subcommittee that is a part of it.

Moreover, last January Iraq declared that it would no longer participate in the meetings of the Technical Subcommittee for purely political reasons. Furthermore, Iraq denies the existence of innocent prisoners of war, in spite of proof of their forced detention and the presentation of supporting written proof to Iraq through the Red Cross.

The manner in which Iraq is dealing with this issue is increasing the daily suffering of the people of Kuwait due to the fact that this issue affects the lives of innocent people. Perhaps it is appropriate to mention here that there are 605 prisoners of war. Of those, 481 are civilians, and 124 are military personnel. The number includes 7 women and 124 students. 345 of the total were between 14 and 30 years of age when they were taken prisoner. These statistics illustrate to all the great suffering felt in every home in Kuwait. Thus, we ask the international community to put pressure on the Government of Iraq to cooperate seriously and effectively towards settling this issue in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and for humanitarian and moral reasons.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government and the people of Kuwait, I wish to thank all the States that spoke during the general debate about the question of Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners of war. All States have reasserted the interest and sympathy of the international community with regard to all forms of human suffering, whether caused by sanctions, wars, captivity or natural disasters. Kuwait categorically rejects double standards in dealing with humanitarian issues. There is no question of greater humanitarian importance than that of prisoners of war, detainees or the missing. We are guided by revealed religious and man-made laws to deal with such an issue so that such prisoners can return to their families or their fate can be determined.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, which deals, *inter alia*, with the growing global challenge of preventing war and disaster. We believe that the report is concise and highlights the major activities of the Organization during the past year. To some extent it is analytical, and it is thought-provoking. It addresses many of the challenges that lie ahead in the next century. The report constitutes, we believe, a good basis for our debate.

Since most of the questions raised in the report would be separately discussed here in the plenary and in the Main Committees, I would like today to touch upon the following.

The Mongolian delegation supports the Secretary-General's emphasis on the question of transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention in his introduction to the report. As underlined in the report, the cost to the international community of the seven major wars in the 1990s, excluding Kosovo and excluding the costs to the countries actually at war, was $199 billion. This does not reflect losses of human lives nor human suffering. According to the Carnegie Commission, most of these costs could have been saved if greater attention had been paid to prevention. I shall not dwell on the question as to how this enormous sum could have been used for the purposes of development, health care, education, and so on. Therefore, understandably, in his report the Secretary-General focuses on prevention of both natural and man-made disasters, especially wars and armed conflicts.

The section on strategies for prevention rightly points out that single-cause explanations for either war or natural disasters are too simplistic. Therefore the prevention strategy requires a multidimensional approach and similar cooperation. The report makes a strong case for a multidimensional approach, which my delegation fully supports. Similarly, my delegation welcomes the changing approach of the Security Council from reaction to prevention. It is in this light that the Council has recently held several open debates on such issues as post-conflict peace-building and the situation in Africa. The response of the membership of the United Nations has been positive and supportive. We believe that this approach should be pursued, developed and enriched.

The general debate has clearly demonstrated that the role of the United Nations in reacting to international emergencies should be clearly defined. The question of so-called humanitarian intervention raises many delicate, debatable and pertinent questions. They include questions of State sovereignty, of moral imperative to act forcefully in the face of gross violations of human rights and many others. My delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General when he states that enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the basis of the Charter.

Another question that was justly raised during the general debate and has also found due reflection in the Secretary-General's report is the inconsistency of the international community in responding to humanitarian emergencies. This question has been justly raised in many forums, including very recently in the Security Council when it considered the progress report on the situation in Africa. We agree with the Secretary-General that the principles of multilateralism and humanitarian ethics should be applied equally, based on the criterion of human need.

The report clearly shows the shift in the nature of peacekeeping, which is acquiring a multidimensional character in keeping with the evolving holistic concept of, or approach to, security. The role of the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations would, according to the very sense of the report, continue to increase. That is why Mongolia, bearing in mind its obligation as a member of the international community and its commitment under the Charter, last week signed with the United Nations a memorandum of understanding on standby arrangements, whereby it would participate in future United Nations operations, contributing staff officers, military observers and medical officers.

Turning to the question of the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, the Secretary-General points to the following three lessons that he has drawn from recent experience: that regional security operations must be mandated by the Security Council if the legal basis of the international security system is to be maintained; that security policies that work in one region may not work in others; and that today's complex humanitarian emergencies require equally complex multidisciplinary responses, which to be effective, need adequate human and financial backing. We fully agree with that conclusion.

The Secretary-General's report clearly demonstrates that it is the small and medium States that are the objects and victims of conflict situations. It is these States that mostly need development assistance or humanitarian aid.

Therefore it would not be an exaggeration to say that the United Nations is a very important and perhaps an indispensable institution for them. It is for this reason that these States are genuinely interested in strengthening the role of the United Nations and its effectiveness at the beginning of the next millennium. Therefore, it is through this prism that these States see the reform of the United Nations and the roles that the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and other organs of the United Nations are called upon to play. In this vein my delegation, like many others, is looking forward to the Secretary-General's report on the Millennium Assembly.

The United Nations is as good as its Members. Therefore every nation, big and small alike, should make its contribution. Mongolia is trying to play an active role in areas where it could make a difference, however modest, where it could contribute most and meaningfully. I have already referred to our commitment to peacekeeping operations. There are several other areas where Mongolia is active, including in non-proliferation and confidence-building. Situated between two nuclear Powers and having been involved in the past in their dispute, Mongolia has declared itself nuclear-weapon-free and is working for institutionalizing its status. This would make Mongolia not only nuclear-weapon-free but also more predictable, contributing thus to further confidence-building and regional stability.

One of the issues that is attracting growing attention lately is the notion of human security. Many delegations have referred to human security, which is a much broader notion than national security. The latter is obviously inadequate today in the face of the new security realities, and thus cannot fully meet the new security challenges. This human security notion seems to be in line with what the Secretary-General described in his report (A/53/1) last year as the "holistic concept of security". The concept focuses on individuals rather than on States. It focuses on the threats to the physical survival of the individual, to his or her daily life and to the dignity of human beings. It includes poverty, environmental problems, transnational crimes, questions relating to refugees and questions of infectious diseases. The general debate has clearly shown that most of the problems that States face today are concerned — directly or indirectly, in one form or another — with human security.

On the other hand, we should be careful not to unduly widen the scope of the concept, which could have implications that could in practice defeat the very purpose of security. Therefore, my delegation believes that it would be useful if the Secretary-General, by appointing a group of experts, could undertake a comprehensive study of this newly emerging security concept. In the past, such studies have proved to be useful in conceptualizing problems and defining ways and means of addressing them. Thus in 1975 the United Nations undertook an important study that was instrumental in defining the concept of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Besides the input of experts, the input of States would be necessary to make such a study truly valuable.

Mongolia's national security concept, adopted as State policy since 1994, defines Mongolia's security in broad terms, including, besides the traditional concept, such notions as economic security, the security of its citizens' rights and freedoms, the security of the population's health and its gene pool, and ecological security.

My delegation would like to turn briefly to the part of the Secretary-General's report on cooperation for development. Last year, when commenting on the Secretary-General's report, my delegation specifically pointed to the inherent handicap that the landlocked developing countries have due to a lack of access to the sea, and thus to world markets. Whatever competitive advantage these countries have is erased by prohibitively high transit and transportation costs, which in some cases, account for almost 40 per cent of total costs. Though we well understand the need to keep the Secretary-General's report short and concise, it is really regrettable that this year's report again makes no specific reference to this important — and for nearly 30 States, most of them among the least developed, vital — question. My delegation expresses the hope that the next report will touch upon it.

My delegation has not addressed many other questions, including specific questions pertaining to international security, international law, development and financing. We shall take them up in due course in the appropriate forums.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its full support for the Secretary-General's activities aimed at reforming the United Nations and making it more efficient and relevant in the next millennium.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, please allow me to thank the Secretary-General

for his annual report on the work of the Organization. The report has given us an overview of the various aspects of the work of the United Nations and summarized from one perspective the events and changes that have taken place on the world stage in the past year. It warrants our careful study.

In recent years some countries have been plagued by conflicts and crises that caused displacement and even bloodshed and large numbers of civilian casualties. This has saddened the whole international community. The Chinese delegation believes that putting an end to these conflicts and crises and eliminating their root causes is the ardent desire of the peoples of the countries concerned, as well as a legitimate concern of the international community. However, such arguments as "humanitarian intervention" and "human rights over sovereignty" that cropped up recently set human rights against sovereignty. What is worse, some countries or regional organizations have gone so far as to take unilateral actions before an international consensus could be reached. This is a trend that calls for our vigilance. We believe that, although the world has changed profoundly since the end of the cold war, the principles of respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs are far from outdated. Deviation from or contravention of these principles will lead to the possibility that sovereignty will be wilfully weakened and widely accepted norms of international relations severely damaged or even obliterated. This will undoubtedly have dangerous consequences in international relations.

In today's world only a very small number of rich, large and strong countries have both the ambition and the power to interfere in other countries' affairs. For small and weak countries, sovereignty is their last defence against foreign bullying. If this defence were to be broken, acts of the rich bullying the poor and the strong bullying the weak would be given the green light and there would be no peace in the world. This is contrary to the aspiration of peoples around the world who want a lessening of conflicts and crises in the post-cold-war era.

Regarding conflicts and disputes around the world and the resulting humanitarian crises, should intervention be carried out under the auspices and core leadership of the United Nations, and with authorization from the Security Council, or are some groups of countries free to take matters into their own hands? This is not a simple question, but one that should be addressed seriously. Besides, different conflicts and crises are caused by different and rather complicated factors. If, instead of easing the tension, outside intervention were to further complicate the situation, how could the intervention be rightly justified? If interventions were made wilfully under the flag of humanitarianism, but in reality caused even greater humanitarian disasters, then how could we be made to believe their so-called reasons for intervention?

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that some countries are eager to intervene in some regions, but have backed away from others where similar problems occurred. We cannot help but ask: if they use different standards in different regions, and are interested in intervention in some areas but not others, how can they tell us that the intervention is just and fair? Maybe under the fig-leaf of humanitarian intervention some are actually seeking to promote their own strategic, military or economic interests. This, if true, is what the people of the world should watch out for.

Humanitarian intervention is a new concept. It is normal for various sides to have different views, and discussions are necessary, or even inevitable. However, such discussions should be based on the Charter of the United Nations and basic norms governing international relations. If the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter were to be considered not applicable and cast aside, our discussion could not possibly produce any correct answer, and the world would only become a more chaotic place to live in. We hope that extensive discussions on this issue will be carried out on the basis of the spirit of the Charter, with a view to reaching an international consensus that is genuinely favourable to the people of most, if not all, countries.

The Secretary-General emphasizes in his report that

> "enforcement actions without Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the United Nations. Only the Charter provides a universally accepted legal basis for the use of force." *(A/54/1, para. 66)*

He also pointed out that

> "if the primacy of the Security Council with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security is rejected, the very foundations of international law as represented by the Charter will be brought into question." *(ibid., para. 69)*

We believe that these remarks represent the consensus shared by the majority of United Nations Member States, and the Chinese delegation fully endorses them.

The fast and forceful wave of globalization has brought with it major challenges as well as abundant opportunities. Developing countries in particular have suffered more from its adverse impacts, and some have even been marginalized in the process. The international community should look at the overall picture and pool its efforts to help the countries concerned to become integrated into the globalization process. The international community should also ensure that the benefits of globalization are equally and equitably distributed to all. We commend the United Nations for the tremendous amount of work it has done and for its achievements in the area of poverty eradication.

We hope that, in line with the requirements of a changing world, the United Nations will hold in-depth discussions on the negative impact of globalization on poverty elimination and, accordingly, elaborate relevant and specific strategies tailored to the needs of developing countries. We hope that the United Nations operational activities will give priority to poverty elimination.

The Chinese delegation believes that the question of humanitarian assistance should be dealt with in keeping with the principles of humanitarianism, neutrality and fairness. The differential treatment given by certain countries, or blocs of countries, in their provision of humanitarian assistance to different regions has resulted in an inequitable distribution of that assistance. For instance, for too long humanitarian disasters on the African continent have not received active and adequate assistance from the international community. This situation is of great concern to us, and we hope it can soon be corrected.

The Chinese Government recognizes and respects the universality of human rights. We believe, however, that this principle should be considered in the context of the domestic situation and realities of various countries. Due to differences in political systems, levels of development, and historical and cultural backgrounds and values, no uniform model for the protection of human rights exists. Countries may set their own priority issues and take different actions with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights, but such differences should not stand in the way of dialogue, exchange and cooperation among them on the basis of equality and mutual respect. The politicization of human rights issues and the use of double standards does not constitute genuine respect for human rights and should not be allowed to continue.

Over the past year, negative developments have seriously undermined international security and hampered progress in the area of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The two most salient examples are in the field of missiles. First, the development and proliferation of missile defence systems by certain countries poses a threat to regional and international strategic balance and stability, and undermines the bases and prerequisites for nuclear disarmament. Secondly, a military super-Power has been using its most advanced missiles recklessly against developing countries, making missiles its tool for meddling in other countries' internal affairs. This has led to missile proliferation.

The Secretary-General's report should make specific reference to the plan by some countries to develop anti-missile systems and outer-space weapons. We hope that the prevention of an arms race in outer space will once again become a pressing issue in the field of multilateral arms control and that substantive work in this connection will soon get under way. The Chinese Government will continue to support the role of the United Nations in the disarmament area, especially in ensuring the concrete observance and implementation of existing disarmament treaties.

Next year, the United Nations will hold both the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit. We all look forward to the dawning of the new century, but let us keep in mind that the arrival of the new millennium does not mean that the old, inequitable international order will fade away with the departing millennium. We face ever-greater challenges, and the United Nations still has a long and arduous way to go. We are confident that with the concerted efforts of all Member States and guided by the purposes and principles of its Charter, the United Nations, as the most representative and important intergovernmental Organization, will gain fresh vigour and vitality in the new century.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): We would like once again to commend the Secretary-General for producing a comprehensive and thoughtful report on the work of the Organization. The challenges faced by the United Nations in recent years have become more complex, and so too have its responses. Indeed, the report is rich in details. We should, for example, commend the intention of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to launch a new, 10-year initiative for girls' education, as noted in

paragraph 158. An educated female population can, for example, significantly assist poverty eradication programmes.

In introducing the report on 20 September, the Secretary-General chose to highlight a single element: the need to take a fresh look at the concept of humanitarian intervention and its impact on traditional concepts of sovereignty. In doing so, he elaborated on a theme he had discussed earlier in a column in *The Economist*, on 18 September 1999. This issue is timely. By sheer coincidence, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore also discussed similar questions in his address to this Assembly on 24 September, and we hope that his speech will be looked at again in the context of this debate. I am glad to note that the Ambassador of Mexico referred to that speech earlier today.

The reaction to the Secretary-General's remarks have been swift and strong. Countries have argued that the principle of sovereignty is our only defence against injustice in the relations between strong and weak nations, and that weakening it would lead to the rampage of hegemonism. You, Mr. President, also commented that the idea of humanitarian intervention is not only alarming, but also actually threatens the very existence of the sovereignty of States, and undermines the sacred principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations itself. Others have acknowledged the need, in the light of changing international circumstances, to reconsider our traditional understanding of that principle, saying that State sovereignty is important, but so is individual sovereignty; that the fact that the redefinition of one should coincide with a renewed consciousness of the other is no accident; and that these developments need not even be seen as parallel, in the sense that they do not meet, for in truth, they converge. Those views have all been expressed in statements made here in the Assembly.

Clearly, a divergence of views has emerged. Both sides in the debate believe that they have right on their side. Indeed, both sides have made legitimate arguments. The proponents of humanitarian intervention argue that in today's world, in which distance has disappeared and the sufferings of people in any corner of the world, from Somalia to Kosovo, are immediately telecast into our living rooms, it is inconceivable for mankind to sit back and fail to react to any gross violation of human rights. Hence, they say, the international community has a duty to intervene, even if this means encroaching upon the sovereignty of the country concerned.

The proponents of preserving sovereignty have equally strong arguments which I set out as follows. The concept of sovereignty was created not to protect the strong, but to protect the weak. Before the dawn of the United Nations Charter and the arrival of the concept of sovereign equality, the law of the jungle prevailed. It was natural for the strong to prey upon the weak. The doctrine of humanitarian intervention could therefore reverse one of the biggest gains of the twentieth century as it would once again allow the strong to intervene in the affairs of the weak, while the weak will never be allowed or, for that matter, be able, to intervene in the affairs of the strong. No country can be said to be under the rule of law if its laws apply only to the weak and not to the strong. Similarly, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention must be seen to affect the sovereignty of both weak and strong impartially. Will any developed country allow, either in principle or in practice, humanitarian intervention in its own territory?

The description that I have given may suggest that there are two distinct schools of thought. The reality, however, is more complex. The issue is not so stark as to force us to choose between insisting on absolute sovereignty or completely surrendering sovereignty. Sovereignty is indeed the key principle of the current State system and the premise upon which the United Nations is based. But in practice sovereignty has never been absolute. The State system is not a Hobbesian state of nature. Even the most powerful State has had to restrain its sovereignty in its interactions with others. In practice, we also subordinate and surrender some portions of our sovereignty when we work together on such issues as the environment, trafficking in women and children and dealing with transnational crimes.

To be sure, humanitarian intervention is a far more sensitive area, because it impinges more directly on the rights and domestic affairs of States. But the fact remains that there are now two currents in international law. A current defined by the traditional notion of sovereignty now coexists uneasily with a second current, defined by the rights of individuals and such issues as human rights. Individuals today are a legitimate subject of international law and international relations. This current of thought exists, whether we like it or not. We cannot wish it away by insisting on the absolute legal concept of sovereignty.

The concept of humanitarian intervention also raises other real difficulties. First, there are situations in which the Security Council is unable to act because the five permanent members cannot agree. Reforms of the

Security Council are under way. However, realistically, we cannot expect much progress in the working methods of the Security Council, in particular with regard to the veto, in any realistic time frame. Yet it is clear that many countries are not prepared to sit idly by when for one reason or another humanitarian disasters or genocide occur. The second difficulty is that even when the five permanent members are able to agree, many Member States are uncomfortable with what appears to them to be the ad hoc and, indeed, sometimes capricious nature of its decisions about when or when not to intervene.

Such feelings of the international community cannot be ignored. They are political facts. We have to deal with them in some way. The world has become too complex and too integrated a place for the international system to be managed by hegemonic power or a concert of large and powerful States, even when that power is deployed with the legitimacy and sanction of the Security Council. If we do not deal seriously with the discomfort of many United Nations Members, we put the future of the United Nations at risk and, looking beyond the United Nations, create instability in the international system.

As I said earlier, one solution to this second difficulty is to reform the working methods of the Security Council. There has been some progress in the direction of greater transparency and more democratic decision-making, but it is clearly inadequate and insufficient to satisfy the majority of Member States. We can also study the suggestion made by the Foreign Minister of Germany, Mr. Fischer, that the five permanent members should always be asked to explain the use of their veto. As he said,

> "According to the Charter, the Security Council acts with the mandate, and on behalf, of all United Nations Member States. But hitherto they have not been entitled to learn why a State has exercised its right of veto. This is not only neither democratic nor transparent, but also makes it easier for States to veto a draft resolution unilaterally for national rather than international interests. The introduction of an obligation for a State to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a draft resolution would make it more difficult to do so" *(A/54/PV.8, p. 12)*.

In the near future, if and when the Security Council is paralysed once again in the face of a real crisis, can we consider asking the General Assembly to review the problem? The General Assembly's key advantage is that it is a universal body. It is also far more transparent in its working methods. Would it not be worthwhile trying to build a political consensus for humanitarian interventions, before undertaking them? To be sure, there is a down side, as there may be delays in responding to a rapidly developing crisis. But this must be balanced against the key political advantage of having a broader political consensus on such actions. The General Assembly's decisions are not binding, but they can be legitimizing and they can be consensus-building, perhaps more so than those of the Security Council because of the General Assembly's universal membership. As the two trends in international law to which I referred earlier are both equally real, it may be worthwhile for the international community and for the United Nations to seriously debate and discuss how the balance between the need for quick action and the need for political consensus on such action can be struck in the General Assembly.

In brief, we do have a complex — indeed, a messy — problem on our hands with the novel concept of humanitarian intervention. We should commend the Secretary-General for his courage in raising difficult questions. It is now up to us, the Members of the United Nations, to provide the answers, for it is we who will live with the consequences.

Mr. Francese (Italy): Italy would like to join the chorus of appreciation and gratitude to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the work of the Organization. The report underlines a key concern that Italy fully shares: meeting the humanitarian challenges of today. We also agree that the main purpose of a modern organization is not simply to react to emergencies but rather to prevent them.

Bearing this in mind, I shall briefly address some of the basic responsibilities of the United Nations as they are set out in the Secretary-General's report, in which they are given high priority.

First of all, the Secretary-General's description of United Nations peacekeeping presents a divided picture: at a time when the international community is deepening its commitment to world peace, the United Nations is encountering growing limits and difficulties in trying to perform its tasks. The Secretary-General's reflections on the lessons of Kosovo and the many tragic conflicts in Africa in particular force us to reexamine the future role of the United Nations.

Action by the United Nations is often blocked by the threat of vetoes in the Security Council. As a matter of fact, the "hidden" veto, not the open veto, is today the

real problem with the working methods of the Security Council. There is also a crisis of political will on the part of Member States. I note that the Secretary-General points to three factors:

> "reluctance of Member States to place their forces in harm's way in a conflict where no perceived vital interests were at stake, a concern over cost, and doubts... that intervention could succeed". (*A/54/1, para. 41*)

These considerations should not cause us to whittle away at the legitimate role of the United Nations. Instead they should lead us to seek new solutions by reforming the Organization and also by coordinating its actions with those of regional organizations wherever appropriate. Thus, Italy strongly endorses the words of the Secretary-General on the arduous task of achieving peace and security and the formidable question of how international interventions should balance effectiveness and legitimacy when there are gross, systematic and massive violations of human rights.

For its part, Italy currently has over 10,000 military personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations from Kosovo to East Timor. For several years now we have also been deeply engaged in the exercise of reforming the United Nations. We thus welcome the participation of other Member States in a common effort to ensure that the United Nations has both the resources it needs and the new structures appropriate for carrying out the tasks that will be entrusted to it in the third millennium.

Prompt and effective action is decisive in restoring peace quickly and in reducing the number of victims of humanitarian emergencies. Italy thus continues to support efforts to promote stand-by arrangements such as those we signed a few years ago, to empower the United Nations with a real capacity for rapid response. It is to further guarantee the effectiveness and timeliness of peacekeeping operations that Italy remains willing to participate in international missions in the framework of regional organizations as well; it confirms its willingness to support United Nations peacekeeping operations also in areas far from its territory and when our national interests are not directly at stake.

Yet efforts to restore peace are of little worth unless they are accompanied by programmes of assistance laying the foundations for a lasting peace. This is why we feel that more priority should be given to post-conflict peace-building, and why, together with other Member States, we are making considerable efforts to provide the United Nations with qualified police forces able to understand and respect local needs and contribute effectively to the restoration of State institutions.

Equally important are programmes to recover and possibly destroy weapons once conflicts have ended. To this end, Italy is proud of having contributed to a pilot operation of this type successfully carried out in Albania.

In the area of development cooperation, Italy enthusiastically supports the call in the Secretary-General's report to build a culture of prevention and to implement prevention strategies that require cooperation across a broad range of agencies and departments. All actors in the United Nations system, both at the intergovernmental level and within the Organization itself, should be fully committed to this goal. We agree that the United Nations and its partners have extraordinary capacities in the development field and that the challenge is to use them more effectively and in a synergetic way. That is why we cannot hide a certain surprise over the marginal role that the report attributes to the Economic and Social Council and its initiatives. This is particularly evident in critical areas such as poverty eradication, African development and post-conflict peace-building.

For example, with regard to poverty eradication, the report makes only passing reference, in paragraph 145, to last July's Geneva session of the Economic and Social Council, and then only to mention the report that was submitted on that occasion. Not a single word is dedicated to the outcome of the session. Furthermore, we learn from paragraph 146 that the United Nations Development Group is preparing a new initiative to help programme countries meet the goal of cutting absolute poverty in half by 2015. We cannot help but wonder why the intergovernmental side of the United Nations is kept in the dark when laudable initiatives of this type are undertaken.

I refer to these examples because they are made even more evident by the care and wisdom bestowed in the otherwise exhaustive report of the Secretary-General upon most other areas and upon effective and fruitful cooperation among United Nations organs and agencies.

In the area of communication, a number of important technological innovations have made more information available to more people than ever before in the history of mankind. This unprecedented moment raises the stakes for all large organizations, which are

judged more and more on their ability to communicate quickly and effectively. This is a challenge that the United Nations too must succeed in meeting. Italy fully supports any and all efforts of the Department of Public Information to accelerate the delivery of United Nations news through the use of new technologies such as fibre-optic cable, the Internet and more powerful computers, both at United Nations Headquarters and at United Nations information centres throughout the world.

The development of global television has raised new concerns about the impact of instant news not only on the industrialized world but first and foremost on developing countries. The World Television Forum represents a unique opportunity for newsmakers and news providers alike to join together in a debate over the rights and responsibilities of the media in a global world. I am pleased to confirm that Italy will again be one of the main sponsors and supporters of the fourth edition of that important Forum in November.

In the area of the international legal order and human rights, Italy wholeheartedly concurs with the evaluations made by the Secretary-General in his report. We are deeply convinced of the increasingly crucial role played by the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights. We agree wholeheartedly that these issues have a cross-cutting nature with respect to the entire programme of work of the Organization.

Over the past 50 years, the nations of the world have developed and ratified an impressive series of international human rights and humanitarian instruments. However, the value of any provision is limited by the extent to which it is applied. Words on paper cannot guarantee the safeguarding of human dignity. This is why Italy has been such a strong supporter of the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda, and why we were in the forefront of the project to establish a permanent International Criminal Court. We remain convinced of the deterrent impact of these institutions and of the need to respond to the increasing demand for prosecution and punishment of the most heinous crimes known to humanity. Thus, we fully share the view, expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, that the agreement reached last year in Rome to establish the International Criminal Court was

> "a watershed in the history of international cooperation for the promotion of human welfare and for the universal realization of human rights". (*A/54/1, para. 260*)

Confident that many other States will join us, we therefore also welcome the Secretary-General's appeal to those Member States that have still not done so to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to take the necessary measures for its implementation. We praise the progress made by the Preparatory Commission in preparing the Rules of Procedure and Evidence and the Elements of Crimes for the future Court. At the same time, we realize that, at its next session, the Commission must continue to work quickly and efficiently to meet the deadline of 30 June 2000 set by the Rome Conference.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Lamberto Dini, stated in this Hall two weeks ago, effective actions should be taken to prevent and repress the most serious violations of human rights, and this is the true meaning and purpose of all international legal regimes for the protection of human rights. It is our sincere hope that the new millennium will usher in an even sharper perception of the international community's duties and expectations in this regard.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): My delegation is happy to find that this year, as in the past two years, the Secretary-General was given the opportunity to introduce his report on the work of the Organization at the beginning of the general debate. This is a welcome arrangement which should continue in the future.

My delegation is particularly happy to see that this year's report has identified issues that have the potential of challenging the international community in the coming years. A year ago my delegation requested the Secretary-General to give particular attention to our suggestion to that effect.

The Secretary-General's report is becoming increasingly readable and presents in a very user-friendly manner a broad picture of the various mandated activities of the world body. The focus on both substantive issues and issues of institutional reform is appropriately balanced and draws attention to the fact that both aspects require full and thorough consideration by the Member States of the United Nations to be effective and efficient.

Bangladesh finds it comforting that the Secretary-General advised the Member States to follow the age-old maxim that prevention is better than cure, and also that the root causes of conflicts and problems, and not merely their symptoms, should be addressed. His arguments for the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of

prevention are very effective. My delegation agrees with the Secretary-General's advice that devising preventive strategies will require a clear understanding of the underlying causes. We agree with him that preventive diplomacy is complemented by preventive deployment and preventive disarmament.

Bangladesh believes that peacekeeping is an effective tool for conflict prevention. We strongly believe that peacekeeping operations should be carried out only under transparent political direction, a precise mandate of the United Nations and an effective command and control structure.

We welcome the attention that the Secretary-General has given in this year's report, to the fact that natural disasters and violent conflicts pose serious challenges to the United Nations and the international community. His emphasis on the most basic principles of multilateralism and humanitarian ethics is absolutely relevant in this context.

The development mandate of the United Nations has special significance for Bangladesh. We are satisfied that due attention has been given to this aspect in the chapter of the report entitled "Cooperating for development". Last year my delegation recommended that the Secretary-General should devote greater space in his report to the activities of the United Nations Development Group. We also recommended that progress in the work on development indicators undertaken by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs be included in the report. We are happy to see that this year's report has given some space to these aspects.

In the section on poverty eradication, Bangladesh recommended last year to include microcredit-related activities of the United Nations, including the United Nations Development Programme's $40 million MicroStart programme. This year's report has a reference to the Microcredit Summit and its goals but does not have sufficient focus on the impact of microcredit activities on the eradication of poverty and the empowerment of women. We believe that the Secretary-General, in his future reports, should highlight the emerging and significant role of microcredit.

While we appreciate the effort of the Secretary-General in drawing the attention of the international community to the transnationalization of the activities of what he calls "uncivil society" side by side with the benefits of globalization, the report does not adequately address the concerns of developing countries that are facing the threat of marginalization in the emerging global process.

Bangladesh is pleased that considerable attention has been given to accountability and oversight in the report. We encourage this to continue in the future. The monitoring of the reform process and resulting improvements in its operations require close attention of the Member States and should be reported upon regularly in a transparent manner.

Bangladesh welcomes the emphasis given in the report to the idea that peace, development and human rights are interrelated. The international community has been alerted to the human rights imperatives of its activities and initiatives. In the future, we would like the Secretary-General to devote some space to the activities relating to the culture of peace, particularly linking it to the ongoing initiatives in various parts of the world involving civil society as a whole.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the Secretary-General again for his well-balanced report. We believe that the suggestions and ideas of Member countries, as articulated in this debate, will continue to be reflected in future reports.

Mr. Sharma (India): Allow me to compliment you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to wish you all success. May I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization and for its thought-provoking quality. We have also considered very carefully the proposals and concepts he posed to the Assembly on 20 September. These ideas deserve in-depth discourse and examination. In view of the time constraint, I will address myself to only a few of these.

The primary objectives which should be served through international relations are social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom through employment of the international machinery in promoting the economic and social advancement of all, securing durable peace and the avoidance of conflict and prevention of the exploitation of weak nations by strong ones through the rule of global ethics and equity. This demands respect for social and cultural diversity, political sovereignty, economic aspirations and vulnerabilities, and, in short, the sense of identity which gives intrinsic self-respect to all members of the family of nations and

peoples. It precludes any form of duress or ascendancy. This principle is the bedrock on which the home of the United Nations is built. The world community cannot therefore rest content until all aspirations are fulfilled; it cannot come up short.

Hence, we applaud the Secretary-General when he states that

> "our commitment to peace cannot end with the cessation of hostilities. The aftermath of war requires no less skill, no less sacrifice and no fewer resources in order to forge a lasting peace and avoid a return to violence." *(A/54/PV.4, pp. 3-4)*

We also applaud the spirit that we perceive behind that statement.

India has always accorded the highest priority to the provision of humanitarian assistance that fully respects the guiding principles laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182. We have, despite strained resources, provided humanitarian assistance, in the spirit of South-South solidarity, to those affected by natural disasters or other humanitarian emergencies. Some recent examples are provided by our assistance to the peoples of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, the Sudan, Tajikistan and the Central American and Caribbean countries affected by hurricanes Mitch and Georges. At the same time, we have not sought humanitarian assistance, attempting, within our abilities and through domestic efforts, to deal with the natural disasters that have befallen us. We thank the Secretary-General for his sympathetic gesture in referring in his report to some of the natural disasters that have afflicted India.

We fully support the view of the Secretary-General that humanitarian assistance should not be driven by media coverage, politics or geography. Its sole criterion should be human need. Otherwise, as the Secretary-General has observed, if we are not true to this ethic, we will be accused of inconsistency at best and hypocrisy at worst. The report has again highlighted the extremely uneven geographical and sectoral distribution of the limited funds provided for humanitarian assistance. In another report on humanitarian assistance, the Secretary-General clearly pointed out that this uneven nature of funding threatened to undermine the basic principles of humanitarian assistance — that is, the provision of aid irrespective of political considerations. We must redouble our efforts to correct these unfortunate anomalies.

The Secretary-General has pointed out that timely humanitarian action in many countries was compromised by the deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers, and also by denial of access. We need to reflect seriously on whether such targeting and denial are not the result of humanitarian assistance being perceived as biased and hence as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. It is clear that the safety and security of humanitarian assistance will not be ensured by signatures on United Nations conventions. It can be ensured only when humanitarian assistance is perceived to be genuinely impartial and neutral and provided in accordance with the guiding principles so clearly enunciated by the General Assembly.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the international community does not respond in a consistent manner to humanitarian emergencies. We continue to believe that an undue focus on a minority of complex humanitarian emergencies distorts global perceptions. After all, the losses due to natural disasters — estimated at more than $90 billion for 1998 by the United Nations — far outweigh those due to wars; deaths due to preventable and curable diseases far outnumber those due to violence. We must not forget that armed conflict is not the only force that is affecting the normal development of millions of women, men and children in today's world. More quietly, the inexorable forces of economic exclusion and social despair, born of the marginalization of the poorest nations, are depriving larger numbers of children from the kind of childhood that would enable them to become part of tomorrow's solutions rather than its problems.

Unbridled globalization and market integration may serve to accentuate this alienation. Millions still die of preventable and curable diseases. Even as Africa suffers from an AIDS pandemic, multinationals' demand for revenue under a rigid intellectual property rights regime, does not allow the provision of relief to needy HIV/AIDS patients and imposes on African countries an unnecessary and unbearable financial burden in this regard. As we will be emphasizing in the debate on the role of science and technology in the Second Committee, the failure to mobilize the fruits of science and technology to meet the crying needs of developing societies should be seen as a contemporary outrage.

We agree with the Secretary-General that weak Governments have little capacity for stopping the eruption and spread of violence and that the shift from war-proneness to war itself can be triggered by the deliberate

fomentation of grievances, all too often propagated by the media. The media are frequently the servants of national mood and prejudice and selective or myopic. They fix the event, choosing the spotlight and relegating others to the shadows. They pick and choose and create what is fact, and sweep other information under the carpet. They conjure up politically convenient realities. In one theatre of conflict after another we have seen the independent media serving as the handmaiden of power.

The Secretary-General has referred to early warning, preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament and post-conflict peace-building. The Foreign Minister of Sweden has rightly observed that lack of knowledge in many cases is not the real obstacle to action.

The Secretary-General has also pointed out that what is missing is the political willingness to use force. We strongly believe that a rising interventionist impulse, using humanitarian concerns as a trigger or pretext, runs the danger of exacerbating conflict between and within countries. This impulse will not be amenable to being divorced from economic or political calculation and may revive the insecurities of a bygone era. The developing world consists of nascent sovereignties. The new century should not dawn upon the threat of a new North-South divide. Deep concern about humanitarian crises should not obscure the reality that action is prone to being viewed through a political prism.

The call for intervention is also being heard when some regressive elements are espousing ideologies supporting enforced homogenization or the separation of ethnic groups, as opposed to supporting the ideal of multicultural and pluralistic societies which respect human variety. In these circumstances, as scholars have pointed out, what some may regard as humanitarian action would be considered by others a war crime. It is clear that the emergence of a principle of armed intervention to redress humanitarian issues would set us on a perilous slope because, in principle at least, there would be no limits to it; because its underlying premise would be based on a dubious presumption that external forces can resolve all problems in every part of the world; and because the United Nations and the international community have neither the resources nor the capability to undertake it.

At a time when the United Nations is in a political and financial crisis, we should be doubly wary of accentuating international divisiveness. Another danger is that theories of intervention seeking to justify interference and use of force to fight alleged repression may end up strengthening the hands of covert interventionists.

The United Nations must focus on the concerns of the vast majority of its 188 Members, which continue to grapple with the challenges of development and eradication of poverty. We want a focus on deepening the success of States and treating the stray phenomenon of failed States as one to be overcome. Our endeavour should be to promote greater international cohesiveness in international cooperation for development. Anything that may exacerbate or deepen fault lines should be eschewed. We should seek answers to the justified concerns of the global community that engage its collective wisdom. Hasty nostrums may aggravate the illness. The General Assembly must continue to address this theme.

Poverty, which impedes durable and just peace, cannot be eradicated unless there is a transformation in the global dispensation, which fails to promote and preserve the interests of the poorer countries and hence of our shared global home. The Secretary-General has reported on innovative partnerships with the private sector, efforts towards enhanced cooperation with the World Bank and greater coordination within the United Nations system. We welcome these. However, even more important are efforts to redress the unfavourable and unsupportive international economic environment for developing economies and a declining commitment to multilateral development cooperation, whether measured by the levels of official development assistance or by the absence of an animating vision. While we appreciate the new developing partnerships, including those with the World Bank, these must preserve the essential character of United Nations development assistance, which is neutral, impartial, provided as grants and based on the priorities defined by the recipient countries.

In the absence of adequate resources, it would be impossible to make any dent in our fight against poverty. Developing societies cannot thrive only on a diet of advice. We believe that democracy, rule of law, transparent and accountable governance, respect for human rights, economic growth and development are mutually reinforcing. Delivery has to embrace all elements. We would be concerned if the United Nations were to seek selective solutions that rely exclusively on strengthening the legal order for the promotion of human rights or enforcement-minded approaches for redressal of human rights grievances. The roots of human rights violations vary and are not always amenable to legislative

and enforcement approaches. For example, situations in which threats to human rights emanate from extreme ideologies require a much more multifaceted approach, whereas human rights problems that are in reality symptoms of underdevelopment can be addressed only by sustained economic growth and development.

Peacekeeping cannot but be an important area of United Nations work. While regional arrangements can play an important role in assisting the United Nations, their efforts should be clearly undertaken within the framework of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Peacekeeping is not an end in itself, but a means to an end and should not be seen as a substitute for the task of nation-building.

We fully share the Secretary General's contention that no post-conflict system can long endure if it fails to improve the lot of the impoverished people. We also believe that more funds need to be earmarked for undertaking peacekeeping operations in Africa, which must be predicated on the consent of the parties, the impartiality of the peacekeepers and the need to be non-intrusive. We have noted the problems encountered by the phasing-out of gratis personnel and are concerned at the lack of an effective transition plan with respect to staff recruitment that addresses loss of continuity and expertise.

A word on sanctions. We have always said that sanctions are a blunt instrument, notwithstanding the "smart" sanctions propounded by some. Sanctions must be used sparingly, after the most careful consideration, and must include obligatory, immediate and enforceable humanitarian exemptions.

Like the Secretary-General, we regret that the Conference on Disarmament could not agree on a programme of work, due to the inflexibility of a few delegations. We share and strongly espouse the goal of the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. Last year, at the non-aligned Summit in Durban, India proposed and the Movement agreed that an international conference be held, preferably in 1999, before the end of this millennium, on a phased programme for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. While this promise remains to be fulfilled, we are disappointed that it appears from the report that the United Nations is still more preoccupied with regimes of non-proliferation, temporary by nature and definition, than with the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons, which is a goal more worthy of it to strongly advocate and pursue.

We have read with interest portions related to globalization in the report of the Secretary-General. The forces of globalization and liberalization have undoubtedly remoulded and recast the entire international economic framework in recent years, generating unprecedented prosperity and growth for some, but accentuating social uncertainty, marginalization and impoverishment for many others.

The inexorable logic of globalization appears to be premised on the graduation of Governments out of the market place, leaving economic development to the corporate world and reducing the function of Governments solely to the creation of an enabling environment that would attract investment, both foreign and domestic, and so transform the economy. The State is expected to focus on social development, invest in education and health and maintain law and order.

However, when we examine more closely how these diverse conditions are to be delivered by the State, it is clear that hasty liberalization can constrain the State in many ways by leaving it with a much smaller basket of revenues with which to address a vast social agenda and also by opening it to dangers, as recently witnessed. The social and security responsibilities of the State are not susceptible to simplistic admonitions from the beneficiaries of liberalization. Nation-building is a complex and uphill task; wisdom has been perceived to lie in the middle way.

In our view, while we seek diverse and durable partners, the need of the hour is to strengthen the partner State and not to further weaken it. In any crisis, economic or political, the final guarantee of the well-being of all is the presence of a responsible and functioning State. Moreover, as the External Affairs Minister of India said, addressing the General Assembly at its general debate a few days ago from this rostrum, it is only strong nations that can make a strong United Nations. A United Nations composed of weak States can only be a weak United Nations. A world order consisting of weak States can only be an unstable world order.

The United Nations has wide and challenging responsibilities as it approaches the next century. We believe that all Member States must work together to make the United Nations more democratic and representative, functioning for the common good, within its Charter, so that through it we are able to harmonize all our resources and energies. The Secretariat assists in this endeavour, led with distinction by the Secretary-

General, by faithfully reflecting the priorities set by the Member States transmitted through intergovernmental mandates and promoting the purposes and principles of the Charter. We commit ourselves to supporting the Secretary-General in his continuing efforts to make the United Nations more responsive to the concerns of the vast majority of its Members, the developing countries, and trust that all Member States will demonstrate their support to it by ensuring that it is placed on a sound financial footing. A United Nations which is on the verge of bankruptcy or is forever scraping the barrel reflects a message of political bankruptcy at best and lack of faith at worst, a message which we do not wish to send out.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for preparing and presenting his report on the work of the Organization *(A/54/1)*.

We have studied his report very closely and believe that it is highly informative and contains useful conclusions and recommendations on the various aspects of the Organization's activities. The report covers a broad range of issues currently on the agenda of the international community, and I should like to comment on a number of its main sections.

As the Secretary-General notes in paragraph 61 of his report, during the 1990s "War and natural disasters remain the major threats to the security of individuals and human communities worldwide."

The threshold of the third millennium has, unfortunately, not brought a harbinger of global stability. The world continues to be torn by regional and ethnic conflicts, and there is a real threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is becoming increasingly obvious that States must intensify their concerted efforts to build a multipolar world, free of centres of power and dividing lines, confrontation and showdown, interference in internal affairs and imposition of policy directives. In this context, we are becoming more and more convinced of the need to increase the Security Council's responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and to give it sole authority to take decisions regarding coercive measures on behalf of the international community.

Another major task of the Organization is the prevention of armed conflicts through the use of preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament. Experience has shown that the use of an effective preventive strategy would make it possible to save hundreds of thousands of lives. In this regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's proposal on building a culture of prevention and continuing the dialogue with Member States on questions of preventive strategy.

Regional organizations play an important role in ensuring the long-term stability of the international situation. At the same time, as the Secretary-General correctly points out in paragraph 69 of his report, "conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking must not become an area of competition between the United Nations and regional organizations". Only mutual respect for each other's priorities and close cooperation can help solve the problems before us.

With a view to making its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, Kazakhstan has consistently called for the creation of security structures on the Asian continent. We are continuing our efforts to realize the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, on the convening of a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA); this initiative was first proposed in the General Assembly in October 1992. The outcome of multilateral talks and discussions within CICA was the holding in Almaty, on 14 September 1999, of a meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Conference. The Government officials responsible for foreign policy signed the declaration of principles guiding relations among CICA member States. The declaration emphasizes the importance of conducting inter-State relations on the basis of the principles of sovereign equality, the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Thus, for the first time in history, the legal foundations of an Asian security system have been laid. In the context of the international community's efforts to strengthen international security, this event is highly significant. An important step has been taken to create a broad regional forum for strengthening peace, stability and cooperation in Asia.

We are grateful to all States participating in the CICA process for their support of our initiative and their genuine willingness to work together to build an Asian security system. I should like to take this opportunity to express once again our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing interest in and support for Kazakhstan's initiative.

Another example of unique cooperation in the area of security is the joint work of the States that make up the group known as the Shanghai Five. The joint activities that were begun three years ago in Shanghai by five countries — Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan — have become a reality in contemporary international relations and a stabilizing factor in a large part of the Asian continent. An important step towards the furtherance of security in the Central Asian region was the holding, in August 1999, of a meeting of the Shanghai Five at the level of heads of State. The agreements concluded and ratified by its members on questions of border regulation, confidence in military matters and mutual reduction of armed forces in border regions help strengthen good-neighbourliness and friendship and make a constructive contribution to ensuring security and stability in the region and the whole world.

Speaking about regional security, we cannot ignore the existence of such complicated problems as the spread of organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. In this regard, we support the conclusion in paragraph 249 of the Secretary-General's report that "an overall strategy for eliminating illicit crops and drug trafficking ... is predicated on the assumption that the drug problem needs to be addressed holistically, which in turn requires close cooperation between the [United Nations International Drug Control] Programme and its national and international partners".

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the concrete steps taken in recent years within the United Nations to strengthen practical cooperation between Member States in combating transnational organized crime. We support the efforts to strengthen the potential of the United Nations as the main coordinating body in this sphere. We are also alarmed at increasing religious extremism and terrorism. All these problems cannot be overcome single-handedly, as the activities of "uncivil society" do not recognize borders; such activities are transnational. Consequently, international cooperation to combat this evil must become universal and comprehensive.

Globalization has the most serious impact on States' social and economic development. In his report the Secretary-General stresses that the challenges of globalization are too great for Governments and international organizations to deal with on their own. The lessons learned from the global financial crisis urgently call for concerted action by the international community to adopt policy measures that are conducive to the stabilization of the situation and the revitalization of economic development.

In this regard, Kazakhstan welcomes the broadening of the dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions with a view to solving the problems that have arisen as a result of globalization. Recognizing the interdependence of the processes of sustainable development, we support United Nations activities to study the different aspects — economic, social, environmental and gender — of globalization. In our view, the Organization must play an even more important role in solving the problems of sustainable development and coordinating development assistance to developing countries, as well as to the countries in transition, in order to promote their integration into the world economy.

Kazakhstan supports the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and its capacity to respond adequately to problems and challenges that arise. In our view, the United Nations has been, and remains, a unique inter-State institution for determining the development of international relations. We hope that the States Members of the United Nations, through their concerted efforts, will contribute to the strengthening and revitalization of the Organization's capacity in the new century.

Today, when we are discussing the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization, I find it appropriate to point out that Kazakhstan fully honours its obligations under the United Nations Charter, including its financial obligations as a Member State. I had the special honour to declare Kazakhstan's full commitment to the lofty purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter when I spoke from the world's most prestigious rostrum on 2 March 1992, the day of my country's admission to the United Nations.

Since this is my last statement from this rostrum in my capacity as the first-ever Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt and deepest appreciation to you, Mr. President, to the Secretary-General and to all Permanent Representatives of Member States for their support and cooperation and their friendliness towards my country and me personally, which I have had the privilege to rely on during my eight years at the United Nations.

I am leaving Headquarters with a feeling of great respect for, and a strong belief in, our Organization, its future authority and its indispensability, because the United Nations is essential to the world and because it is essential to my own country. Please allow me to wish you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General, Permanent Representatives and all my other colleagues new accomplishments and well-being in the coming century.

The President: On behalf of the Secretary-General, on my own behalf and on behalf of the General Assembly, I wish the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan well in her future endeavours.

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for the timely presentation of his annual report on the work of the Organization. The Secretary-General is thus fulfilling his responsibility of drawing the attention of Member States to issues of the greatest international importance and to the state of our Organization during the period concerned. As well as thanking him, we commend him for his frank diagnosis and the strength of conviction that underpins his leadership.

The diagnosis and comments of the Secretary-General deserve the attention of the highest authorities of Member States, since it is incumbent upon them to guide the Organization and chart a safe course during times of transition, such as the international community has been experiencing over the past few years. At the end of a century replete with achievements for humankind, we must all work together to make sure that the tragedies we have witnessed do not recur in the next century. Under your able presidency, Sir, the General Assembly can contribute in a meaningful fashion to this exercise.

Venezuela agrees with the Secretary-General that conflict prevention has pride of place at the present international juncture. We also agree that because of their complexity, the causes of conflicts — which, as recent events have shown, are increasingly of a domestic nature — require complex interdisciplinary solutions. Faced with these realities, Venezuela believes that national Governments bear the primary responsibility for dealing with the complex causes of such conflicts.

Factors such as good governance, internal security or equal access to opportunities for human development, which the Secretary-General endorsed in his report, are areas that are inherent in national sovereignty. At the same time, Venezuela considers that the international community must shoulder the responsibility for contributing to preventing conflicts and emergency situations, in a way compatible with national sovereignty and the international legal order, through greater and better targeted international cooperation.

Thus, the Organization's efforts to place the topic of social development, in all its aspects, in the foreground, is a significant step forward, and the potential positive results for peace and security are beginning to be recognized. Similarly, the efforts to confront illicit transnational activities — including drug trafficking in all its aspects and matters related to the criminal prosecution of horrific human rights violations — also deserve our attention.

These and other examples illustrate that there is a broad area of international cooperation in which we can gradually develop a doctrine and practice to preserve peace and security, harmoniously combining the respective responsibilities of national Governments and the international community, without prejudice to the existing legal order, national and international, but in conformity with its development and evolution on normative bases. Solutions to humanitarian and human rights crises can and must benefit from this approach, the only reliable guarantee of international stability.

At the same time, it must be recognized that in the short term there may be special situations in which a prolonged failure to resolve internal conflicts or situations of tension threatens international peace. Venezuela therefore believes that "early warning" must play a crucial role. We agree with the Secretary-General that

> "Early warning is ... a necessary condition for effective preventive diplomacy" (*A/54/1, para. 68*).

This is why we trust that the Secretary-General, with the prudence that must guide him in all his tasks in this field, will take the initiative whenever he deems it opportune so that the Organization can deal appropriately and in a timely manner with situations which, because of their urgency or possible consequences, merit concern. Early warning would allow the Organization to take necessary measures, based on the Charter and on international cooperation.

We believe that the most complex and urgent challenges facing the Organization and its Member States are preventing the causes of armed conflict, preventing their outbreak or spread, and in particular warding off

their human consequences. Merely reacting after the fact, while we do not wish to underestimate the importance and difficulties of such actions, does not alone fulfil the lofty values of our Organization. Prevention is the best way to provide the necessary guarantees for the principles of non-intervention and respect for national sovereignty. Venezuela considers such efforts for prevention mandatory, for itself as a Member State and for the Organization as a whole. My Government is prepared to do anything it can to contribute to preventive action, just as it has done in the past for the sake of peace in our region.

The annual report that is before the Assembly today is a valuable contribution to our consideration of all the matters that Member States have entrusted to our Organization. We have focused our statement on but one of the many subjects that it has brought to our attention, because we consider that subject to be of particular relevance. However, they are all equally important, and my Government will devote the same attention and consideration to each of them in the course of this session of the General Assembly, with a constant view to contributing to the strengthening of our Organization.

In conclusion, allow me once again to commend the Secretary-General on his valuable contribution and to thank him for his leadership in managing the affairs of the Organization in the year covered by his report.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.